



News Release

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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Short Term Water Supply Outlook Improves, but Drought Continues

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The Idaho Water Supply Committee reports that in recent weeks, the water supply outlook for 2005 has improved dramatically in many parts of Idaho, but the long cycle of drought is far from over.

In the Big Wood and Lost River Basins, rainfall since May 1st has reached levels that are 230% of normal. In the Southwestern Idaho, the first ten days of the month have brought precipitation levels that are 215% of normal. Two months ago, it appeared 2005 might be the worst moisture year on record in the Treasure Valley. Now it looks like accumulations in that part of the state could recover to near average levels by the end of the month.

The series of spring storms have caused some planting problems for farmers, but have also delayed irrigation demand meaning the supply should last until September but is still less than a full supply.

Recreational opportunities look much more promising too. Reservoirs levels should be maintained at higher levels for longer periods of time than was predicted earlier this year. For instance, Lucky Peak Reservoir east of Boise should remain full until mid to late July. In March, there were predictions the water levels begin dropping in June. The Upper Snake River system also improved with most reservoirs look better than last year. The exception is Jackson Lake in Wyoming.

While the short-term water picture is certainly improved, it is important to remember that Idaho is still gripped by a drought cycle that happens approximately once every 500 years. Six straight years of below normal precipitation levels have caused a water deficit of about 14 inches in Southwestern Idaho, which amounts to about a year's worth of precipitation for much of the state.

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